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## Review of The Biblical Canons. Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologiarum Lovaniensium, vol. 163 by J.-M. Auwers and H.J. de Jonge, eds.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

THE BIBLICAL CANONS. Edited by Jean-Marie Auwers and Henk Jan de Jonge. *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 163. Leuven: Peeters, 2003. Pp. lxxvii + 717. \$68.

The last 50 years have witnessed a steadily growing interest in the topic of the biblical canons, their origins, and development. This fine collection of essays (the proceedings of the Fiftieth Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense held July 25–27, 2001) is a welcome addition to that ongoing conversation. The topic of biblical canons is of interest to both biblical scholars who maneuver among technical discussions of a historical and textual nature, and theologically-oriented scholars engaged in larger hermeneutical questions. The topics include “the history of (parts of) the biblical canon, the relevance of the canon for the exegesis of particular (passages of) books included in the Bible, and the consequences of reading the Bible as canon. Historical, hermeneutical, and theological aspects of the biblical canons competed for the participants’ attention” (vii). The proceedings have been divided into OT and NT sections, and within those categories the essays are distinguished as either main papers or offered papers. The entire collection is introduced by Thomas Söding’s essay, which contextualizes the theological questions surrounding the interpretation of the Bible as canon. The collection comes complete with a helpful index of authors and ancient texts.

The twelve papers on the OT canons explore complex questions of history, exegesis, textual criticism, and hermeneutics. Historical papers range from discussions on the dating of the canonization of the tripartite Hebrew Scriptures on the basis of Jewish and Christian evidence (Arie van der Kooij and Gilles Dorival) to challenges that a tripartite canon even existed as early as the Second Temple period (Eugene Ulrich). Several papers, either explicitly or implicitly, treat issues of concern to textual criticism or discuss the relationship of the Septuagint, the so-called Alexandrian Canon, to the Hebrew text (especially Johan Lust, Evangelia G. Dafni). It should also be no surprise to find in such a collection specific discussions of the biblical Psalter (Jean-Marie Auwers, Erich Zenger, and Susanne Gillmayr-Buchier), the prologue of Sirach (van der Kooij, Veronica Koperski, and Johan Leemans), the Deuteronomistic History (Jacques Vermeylen, Matthias Millard), and the exploration of larger hermeneutical questions (Auwers, Zenger, Johann Cook, and John Barton).

The section on the NT canon is made up of 17 papers. The opening essay by Henk Jan de Jonge fittingly introduces and contextualizes the modern scholarly study of the NT canon by focusing on the question of orthodoxy. The papers in this half treat a variety of topics, including the canonization of Paul’s letters (Andreas Lindemann), the four Gospels, and the Johannine corpus (Graham Stanton, Jean Zumstein, Konrad Huber, and Martin



Hasitschka), and also address the evidence for the emergence of the Christian canon of the OT and NT, covering time periods from the Apostolic age to Byzantium (Marinus de Jonge, Jens Schröter, Joseph Verheyden). One can find papers dealing with textual criticism (Camile Focant) and also papers on theological and hermeneutical matters (Nicholas Perrin, Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, Robert L. Brawley, Johannes Nissen, Chris Ukachukwu Manus).

The attempt to group the essays in this volume by topic is neither exclusive nor exhaustive, since often one piece could easily be included under several headings. Essays that are particularly valuable or may be of particular interest to the readers of *Theological Studies* (interested in engaging the discipline-specific conversations of biblical and theological studies in a fruitful dialogue) include those that explore larger hermeneutical questions or clarify terminology that may be used inconsistently by historical-critical scholars and theologians. One can see from the essays that the terminology and criteria for canonicity developed very differently for the OT and the NT texts. One thus might profitably begin with Ulrich's discussion of the complex historical development and technical definitions of canon in his treatment of the issues during the late Second Temple period (including a useful appendix of the various definitions of "canon" that are available today). Ulrich's essay can then be compared to de Jonge's on the NT canon that highlights the inconsistent application of the various objective criteria for NT canonicity, suggesting that a more pressing criterion in NT canonical determinations was a text's theological orthodoxy. Further, Barton's methodological essay on canonical approaches would be worthwhile for scholars of both the Bible and theology. Whether or not one agrees with Barton's ultimate critique of Childs's program, as outlined in his influential studies, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (1970) and *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (1979), it should be acknowledged that Barton's discussion touches on some of the inconsistent ways that biblical scholars and theologians have understood Childs's approach.

One caution, however: Although this volume has something to offer to scholars who may be either theologically oriented or interested in engaging the discipline-specific conversations of historical and scientific study of the Bible, a majority of the essays here may be categorized under the latter, as they engage more technical topics.

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GOD AND VIOLENCE: BIBLICAL RESOURCES FOR LIVING IN A SMALL WORLD. By Patricia M. McDonald. Scottdale, Penn.: Herald, 2004. Pp. 374. \$16.99.

Patricia McDonald undertakes a detailed study of the most significant biblical texts dealing with violence and offers important insight into this thorny issue. On the one hand, she ably challenges those who are alienated by violence in the Bible to consider the pertinent texts within their literary